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ABSTRACT

In 1983, a project at East Devon College of Further Education sought to identify learning needs in scattered rural communities, particularly among the unemployed, and to meet those needs with distance education technology. The project team identified the characteristics of several types of rural Devon communities and assessed curricular needs through direct contact with the rural unemployed. After several unsuccessful attempts in villages, the project began in the small, isolated town of Okehampton, in mid-Devon. Considerable effort went into publicizing short introductory courses based on identified needs, but only 12 people enrolled in 2 courses. One course, in navigation, was delivered. A teleconferencing bridge with voice and data telephone lines linked East Devon College and the town. Equipment consisted of microcomputer, high resolution visual display unit, graphics pad and light-sensitive pen, and loudspeaker and microphones. Various technical hitches on both voice and data lines resulted from operator inexperience, management problems, and malfunctions. Although the amount of education actually delivered was small, the project demonstrated that this delivery system could circumvent constraints on class size by allowing several scattered small groups to be taught simultaneously. The project also highlighted education provided by local drop-in centers and self-help groups, which bypassed formal educational institutions. Appendices outline identified learning needs and describe low-cost courses offered by local sources. (SV)

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A Computer-Based Curricular Provision for Rural Communities (RP110)

by

Further Education Unit

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RP110 46. Attachment 2 to FEU/B87(0)(85)24

A Computer-Based Curricular Provision for Rural Communities (RP110)

ABSTRACT

1. This report looks at the learning needs of isolated rural communities, and especially of unemployed people, and at the ways in which these needs have been, or might be met. Unless there is a spontaneous surge of energy and external finance (M.S.C. E.E.C. Community Development) or a tradition of self-help, the provision of learning opportunities is negligible in rural areas, as financial constraints have severely limited the part the Education service is able to play.

2. Unemployed people in rural areas tend to be isolated as individuals. There is no street corner culture as in urban areas. The team made home visits at the needs-gathering stage, but no isolated unemployed people took advantage of the courses designed to meet the needs they expressed. The ones who came forward were already linked with small groups with a good support infra-structure. The team decided to concentrate on small centres serving isolated groups.

3. The research project has identified and successfully used the EXCOM/DAROME delivery system already tested by the Open University under its earlier name of CYCLOPS. It is an audiovisual data communication system coupled with direct voice communication. The equipment consists of micro-computer, high resolution colour visual display unit, graphics pad and light-sensitive pen, with loudspeaker and microphones. The system permits interaction between two or more centres over the public telephone network.

4. Existing learning provision in rural areas often involves heavy transport costs. The same provision can be made more cheaply by this system.

5. New learning opportunities are created. There is a concomitant social benefit.

6. Staff development requirements are modest: familiarisation with the equipment and with audioconferencing techniques. Actual class preparation time is of the same order as preparing class notes and OHP materials.

7. Ease of use gives the system high acceptability among students as well as staff. The system has gained credibility among County officers and college staffs, and this is demonstrated by the number of L.E.A. and college submissions to different funding bodies in which the system has a crucial role.

8. The project draws attention to the grass roots movement of Drop-in centres and self-help groups which look to voluntary organisations and to M.S.C. for help, rather than to Colleges of Further Education or adult education organisations. It recommends that formal education should support existing networks, and should make available its expertise through the EXCOM/DAROME system.

9. Once established, an EXCOM/DAROME network would be available to other agencies such as Health & Social Services seeking to meet local needs, and to local self-help groups. Teaching skills can be made use of wherever they happen to be on the network; they do not have to be brought into an F.E. centre.

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Section One

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

THE EXPERIMENTAL COLLEGE

1. East Devon College of Further Education (EDCFE) is situated on the outskirts of Tiverton and serves a population of one hundred and fifty thousand in a mainly agricultural area bounded by the Somerset and Dorset boundaries in the north and east, the coast of east Devon in the south and Crediton in the west. An extensive system of buses is used to transport the students. This limits the length of College day and extra-curricular activities. A recent development (1981) has been the establishment of a Further Education unit at Seaton which serves as outreach provision for the east of the area.

2. The College was re-established on a matrix basis some years ago, with 13 academic teams servicing 4 departments. Students are helped to build up individual study programmes across departmental boundaries, and have considerable control over their own learning, backed by an integrated tutorial and guidance system.

In 1982-83, 3,755 students were enrolled, as follows:

		No.	%
i)	Full-time, sandwich and block-release	720	19
ii)	Part-time day and evening	2753	73
iii)	Short courses	282	8
		3755	100

There are 95.4 full-time equivalent staff, 11.7 part-time lecturers, 10.1 technician staff, in addition to learning resources and library staff and administrative staff. The College has nominated a Head of Department with special responsibility to liaise with industry and to co-ordinate College responses, particularly under the PICKUP (Professional, Industrial and Commercial Updating) banner.

RESEARCH PROJECT

3. This research project began in September 1982 under the title: Mobile teaching support in rural community (RP110). At that time the College was concerned that programmes provided in training centres and colleges were inaccessible to many rural communities. Consequently people were deprived of educational opportunities available to their urban contemporaries. Isolation had become more acute in recent years as bus services were withdrawn, village shops and post offices were closing down and small schools were threatened with closure, with the consequent migration out, or failure to migrate in, of families with young children.* It seemed also that curriculae, in terms of formally structured programmes, were becoming inappropriate because of the disappearance of those employment factors which previously had encouraged migration to the towns. The College postulated that rural communities were likely to expand and to develop new identities, requiring a range of new skills.

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* This withdrawal of services was based upon demographic projections of falling populations. The 1981 census shows that the rural population is rising.

EARLY STAGES

4. In the course of investigating learning needs (see Appendix I) we interviewed local government officials, parish councillors, rural community council officers, COSIRA staff, voluntary agencies, Chambers of Commerce, priests, social workers, college staffs, unemployed people and disabled people. We decided that a vehicle would not offer the best delivery system and that a better solution might be provided by using information technology. We considered teleconferencing and chose the CYCLOPS system, which otters graphics in addition to voice along the existing telephone network. We chose this system because

i) it offers a high level of personal interaction

ii) it had been successfully tested by the Open University (OU) over a 3 year project in the East Midlands

iii) it would be cost-effective (see Section Seven)

iv) it could also access public viewdata systems (see Section Two paras. 19 - 21

v) development work was under discussion with the manufacturers which might lead to a version of CYCLOPS linked with the BBC microcomputer, and it was government policy to instal BBC micros in all primary schools

NEW SUBMISSION

5.1 This proposed change of delivery system required a resubmission to the FEU in April 1983 which was approved. The research project was retitled: A computer-based curricular provision for rural communities (RP 110) and its aims were:

i) to identify learning needs in scattered rural communities particularly among the adult and young unemployed

ii) to devise ways of meeting these needs through appropriate curricula and learning programmes

iii) to select appropriate delivery systems, including the use of the CYCLOPS system

iv) to set up appropriate in-service training and staff development programmes

v) to carry out the programmes

vi) to evaluate them

5.2 Under the new brief we continued the study of learning needs and established criteria for deciding where to place the 3 CYCLOPS units which we could afford. Various problems delayed the purchase and delivery of the equipment which was finally installed and ready for use in our 3 chosen sites in March 1984. By this time CYCLOPS had been superseded by the EXCOM/DAROME workstation. (Section Five.) In our search for a suitable teleconferencing bridge to connect our 3 sites we came across the Plymouth audioconferencing network (PACNET), funded by the Council for Educational Technology (CET), British

Telecom (BT), the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) and Plymouth Polytechnic. PACNET is the first large scale trial of educational teleconferencing in the U.K. We were offered free use of its up-to-date teleconferencing bridge for the first year. Collaboration with this much larger research project has taken the research much further than originally envisaged. (See Section nine).

GETTING STARTED

6. Our equipment was in position in March, but the PACNET bridge was at that time concentrating on audioconferencing and not yet operational for audiographics. We could not wait any longer and so we decided we must begin our first taught course on a point-to-point basis, which meant that we could dial direct, and have total control of the operation. When the bridge was ready for audiographics we used it.

7. We have therefore only one extended taught course and some EXCOM/DAROME teleconferencing demonstrations and individual lessons to report. However, these demonstrations have made a powerful impression on policy makers in the county, among whom are members and officers of the L.E.A. who are actively seeking new funding to extend the network which the project has begun.

RURAL DEVON

POPULATION

8. Devon has only one large city and that is Plymouth with a population of a quarter of a million. (Central government regional offices are in Bristol.) Torbay comes next in size, then comes Exeter with much less than half the population of Plymouth. There are seaside resorts, little market towns and pockets of modern industry.* The bulk of Devon is rural. There has been a steady increase in population in all areas since the 1961 census. The rural population is increasing faster than the average population in the south west.** The 1981 census showed a population of 58,439 in Mid-Devon and 106,885 in East Devon. c.19% of the population are aged over 65: a significantly larger proportion than the national figure of c.14.5%. Many are living alone.

EMPLOYMENT

9. Devon has some 3,000 smallholdings of under 15 acres, occupying only 1.3% of the agricultural area. Such holdings are described by the Ministry of Agriculture as statistically insignificant; they are small and they provide employment for fewer than 100 man hours per year each. (Western Times & Gazette 2.7.82.) The small towns offer tourism and mixed industries of various types, many of them related to agriculture and dairy products. There are also textiles, some medium and light engineering, building, and printing and business services. Of a 10% sample of employed men in mid-Devon, 1,500 in all, just over a quarter were employed in manufacturing industry, one sixth were in service industries, one sixth in distributive and catering industries, one sixth in agriculture, forestry and fishing, the rest unspecified. Most employed women work in service industries or distribution and catering. "As a gross generalisation it is probably true to say that small firms become more important as you go West in the West Country and manufacturing becomes less important as a source of employment."***

10. Unemployment also tends to increase as one goes west. In June 1981, the unadjusted unemployment rate, including school leavers, was 7.8% in Somerset, 11.4% in Devon and 13.3% in Cornwall, compared with 10.6% for the U.K. as a whole.

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* (Census 1981 Preliminary Report: Devon pop. 952,000; Plymouth 243,895; Torbay 115,582; Exeter 95,621; East Devon 106,320; West Devon 42,996; Mid-Devon 58,057; North Devon 78,728).

** A study of Hatherleigh in North West Devon, chosen as a typical example of rural decay, with a population reducing in every census from 1,293 in 1901 to 920 in 1971, showed that in 1978 the population had increased to 1,000. Inward migration had exceeded outward migration, and three quarters of the new arrivals were people of working age.
GLYN-JONES Anne, Rural recovery: has it begun? Devon County Council and the University of Exeter, 1979.

*** BANNOCK Graham, Enterprise west: a study of small business in the west of England prepared for Shell UK by Economists Advisory group. Sept. 1981.

UNEMPLOYMENT IN DEVON

11. Much employment in Devon is seasonal: both agriculture and the hotel and catering industry are major employers. Wages tend to be low: many jobs offer the legal minimum (1984 rate = £58.50 per 40 hour week.) A DHSS officer interviewed by BBC Spotlight West, 28.8.84, confirmed that unemployment is often a chosen alternative for the young in summer resorts. In rural areas also unemployment in the summer may have attractions over low paid work. "When the money runs out they go fishing." The BBC reported that Torquay Unemployment Centre had more than 150 vacancies which were not being taken up, though there were many unemployed people in the town. One young unemployed chef explained that he can draw £68.50 from "the Social" to cover bed and breakfast at £35.00 and unemployment benefit. Unemployed, he was £10 per week better off than working, and was having a summer-long holiday in the seaside resort. A representative of the industry commented that to raise the wages would cause even more bankruptcies in a badly hit industry.

12. This illustrates how complex the issues are and how difficult it is for educational providers to respond appropriately. In Sheffield, there is vocational preparation for non-existent jobs; in Devon a man trained for a job that does exist opts for unemployment. The problem is compounded by political decisions on minimum wage levels and acceptable benefit levels.

STUDIES OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN DEVON

13. For over half a century the Development Commission has assisted groups concerned with the social life of villages as well as carrying out its basic remit of developing the rural economy. Much of its effort is channelled through the Rural Community Councils and the Councils for Social Service. The Rural Community Councils conduct surveys of social conditions in villages, assist in securing grants and loans for village halls, encourage arts and adult education, provide personal advice and aid services, facilitate the co-ordination of voluntary activities to supplement statutory services and provide a consultancy service for local organisations. Studies of needs in rural Devon have been done under the auspices of the Development Commission and the Community Council of Devon, as well as by other groups such as COSIRA, the Sports Council, and the Dartington Trust.*

14. The Community Council of Devon has encouraged parish initiatives through "Devon Village Ventures": a competition to publicise and support volunteer-led projects in rural communities. This has produced a number of village appraisals using questionnaires constructed by village organisations themselves with a very high level of response: as high as 90% in some cases.** The Community Council of Devon supports a number of other ventures: a "Village Contacts" scheme: a network of village representatives to help people seeking information; a magazine, "Village Green"; parish "clinics" which bring in experts to answer questions of local concern; the South Molton Information Project (para. 22).

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* The Dartington Trust supports educational, agricultural and industrial initiatives in South and North Devon, as well as a number of artistic projects such as the Beaford Centre which provides a home for arts and theatre in North Devon.

** "They canvass local opinion and outline local hopes for the future." Dartmoor National Park annual report,1982-83.

*** Rural Voice is an alliance of 8 national organisations representing rural communities. Between them they represent over 780,000 members with branches in every village in the country and thus a world of experience and knowledge of rural life.

NEEDS IN RURAL DEVON

15. Services provided centrally are diminishing: schools, village shops, post offices, are closing, and more post offices are likely to close as a result of DHSS automated credit transfer. Tied public houses owned by big breweries are threatened. Bus services are poor and getting worse. The impact of the privatisation of British Telecom has yet to appear.

16. These are problems which are common to all scattered rural areas in Devon, and many organisations are putting effort and energy into seeking solutions: e.g. Rural Voice, the Community Council of Devon, the adult education service, the Citizens' Advice Bureaux, the British Library Service, inter alia. The Development Commission points out that the closure of local schools may well undermine the effectiveness of any proposed economic and social initiatives.

17. These common problems apart, there is a great diversity of rural communities: lifeboat communities, areas with little or no migration, old depressed residential areas, retirement areas, villages with sturdy, non-conformist traditions, tourist areas, and areas with special problems. This diversity is reflected in the ways in which village communities tackle, or fail to tackle, their problems, and is illustrated in Section Three. "If anything happens at Village A it is because the villagers want it and they'll do it; if anything happens at Village B it is because the vicar wants it and MSC will pay; if anything happens in Village C it's a bloody miracle."

NEED FOR INFORMATION BASES IN RURAL AREAS

18. In rural areas, the search for information and help is costly in travelling time and money.This is particularly hard on unemployed people, many of whom have difficulty in finding their way through the maze of welfare rights legislation (earnings rules, housing benefits, relocation grants, subsidised fares to hospital etc.) and need expert help. An uninformed choice of office may mean delay and another expensive journey: some offices are not open every day; bus services may operate once or twice-weekly, if at all.

EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION

19. Research shows that, even in cities, many adults and young people, lacking adequate information, assessment, advice and counselling, may commit themselves to years of study inappropriate to their career aspirations.* In rural areas there is the additional problem of finding out where courses are. Few people, including College Staffs, are familiar with the full range of continuing eudcational provision available. There is a strong case for establishing an educational data-base on a public viewdata system in every rural area. The need for information is the basic need of all learners, whether or not their learning is directed through the formal education system. The EXCOM system can help meet this need; although it is not a data-base in itself, it can access PRESTEL and other public viewdata systems, can store information in local memory, can recall information from tape. It is true, of course, that anyone equipped with computer, modern and suitable software, can access viewdata systems.

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* See BUTLER Linda, Educational guidance for adults. Some terms, definitions and issues in the practice of educational guidance by independent services and public libraries. pp. 3-5.

CONTENT OF EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION BASE

20. The O.U. Educational Advisory Services Project (EASP) (Yorkshire Region) emphasises that educational data bases for adults should be enquirer-based rather than institution-based, if they are to be comprehensive, objective and accurate. They should list and frequently update ALL local educational opportunities, public and private, vocational and non-vocational, as well as all training opportunities in the local area, indicating level of work, career and further training outcomes, location of courses, costs and available grants. "Local area" should be determined by the enquirer in terms of geography and transport rather than by institutions in terms of catchment area.

LOCATION OF INFORMATION BASES

21. Since this is all public information, E.A.S.P. suggests it might best be collected and processed by the Library service, which has the advantage of easy access outside office hours. This of course applies only in towns. The Library service, despite its reputation for being without bias and its good public image, may be less used by our target groups than Job-Centres, Drop-in Centres and village halls, all of which places could house EXCOM terminals, or similar equipments.

DEDICATED NETWORKS

22. We have had discussions with the director of a British Library project called PIRATE. It is intended to create a dedicated information network (TORCHNET) in Devon based on Honiton and South Molton libraries. Dedicated networks are limited in that they cannot be accessed from outside: information therefore will be available only at library-controlled terminals. We think that it would be better if the valuable information available from the libraries could be accessed from outside TORCHNET by e.g. EXCOM equipment initially installed as an education network, or by any other compatible equipment. This comment is not simply directed at PIRATE. Any dedicated network by its very nature denies access to its information. An open network could serve the public, the L.E.A., M.S.C., the D.H.S.S. and other agencies and could offer, for example:

- local lists of key occupational areas where lack of training is causing problems with economic recovery and development
- a means of ascertaining the adult training needs of local employers
- a skills register for the service of the whole community
- co-ordination of education information between colleges
- access to County Planning Department's information on industrial and manpower trends
- links between existing organisations

23. Setting up an enquirer-centred educational base requires collaboration between providing agencies. An inter-agency network requires inter-agency resources. Such a network could meet the information needs of people in rural areas via a suitable terminal. In the long-term, resources having been made available, anyone within reach of a village school computer would have access to the whole network. There are implications here for inter-agency staff development: (See Section Six - Staff Development).

Section Three

CHOICE OF SITES

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24. As predicted, our investigations revealed that there are scattered rural communities all over Devon which have no access to educational provision. However, we had money for only three workstations, one of which would have to be sited in the College at Tiverton. We considered working with existing projects such as the Third Age Project in South Devon (See Section Eight). However, conscious of costs, we began to look at census data and appraisals of hamlets and villages within the local telephone area; and, conscious of time pressures, we looked at places within 1½ hours drive of the College. We selected three villages and a residential home for severely disabled people for close investigation. All suffer from lack of public transport and access to amenities. Each has its unique problems and approach.

25.1 VILLAGE A

25.1.1 Village A is 16 miles from its local College of FE, 6 miles from the College outpost and 12 miles from the FE College in the neighbouring county. There is no public transport. A private coach runs twice a week. A College bus collects students. The main employers are the dairy products factory and local builders and farmers. There is little unemployment. There is no feeling of urgency about youth unemployment. "A boy who might be a misfit in the town just comes back on the farm".

25.1.2 There is a great local pride and self-sufficiency, and a strong non-conformist element, with Plymouth Brethren and Baptists well represented. The village is proud that it does things for itself. The young faremer's movement, now a national movement, began there in 1921. The dairy products factory was started as a co-op. The village has the largest rural scout troop in the U.K. and boasts a number of Queen's Scouts. It has a playgroup, brownies, venture scouts, a young farmers' club, a singing group, a monthly market with 22 stalls (usually hired by village organisations), a free magazine, "Parish Pump", which appears every other month. There are a well-supported football club, skittles and bowling clubs, a newly revived tennis club and a games and snooker club which is well-supported by youths and older men who are on shift work at the factory.

25.1.3 The village hall is a centre for the village. There is a strong local feeling that Mid Devon District Council subsidises centres in towns, at the expense of villages, and that money should come back to the villages. There is a constant struggle to raise money for maintaining the building. What the village needs is a regular income. Some very successful classes are held there, put on by the village hall committee. The numbers attending would be considered gratifying by any rural college. (See Appendix II). The fees charged are very low. No formal education provision could compete.

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25.1.4 When asked if there is anything Village "A" needs and is not able to supply, the secretary of the village hall mentioned:

- basic country skills
- plastering
- elementary stone wall work
- putting up shelves
- learning to drive

but she felt that somebody local would turn up trumps. "We don't really need anybody from the Education Department. Too much red tape and too expensive".

The Vicar and doctors added the following needs:

- remedial teaching
- extra help to do own remedial help
- computer appreciation for parents
- music

but warned that local people preferred to manage their own affairs.

25.2 VILLAGE B

25.2.1. Village "B" is centrally placed in the Culm Valley, has a comprehensive school serving the upper end of the Valley. It is 6 miles from Village A and similar in size. It straddles the same river. Unlike Village A it has not got a long tradition of self-help. It has, however, a very active Vicar who has drawn funds and expertise into the village through the Council for Christian Care and through M.S.C. A "Culm Valley Activities Centre" has been set up to meet the needs of unemployed people in the village and its adjoining parishes. (See Appendix II).

25.2.2 The first issue of it's monthly news sheet* lists the familiar reasons for "enforced idleness": continuing unemployment, inadequate transport, remoteness from centres of population and urges self-help and community work supported by the centre and M.S.C. It points out that for some, enforced idleness is an opportunity to develop new skills or to improve old skills, or to enter "new fields of service to the less fortunate members of the local community, the elderly and the handicapped". There is an increasing need for voluntary work; the new policies implemented by Exeter Area Health Authority are concentrating on community provision rather than institutional provision for the handicapped people. Fortunately, the MSC's Voluntary Projects Programme is concerned with promoting local voluntary effort, so that unemployed people can serve the community without jeopardising their unemployment benefits.

*Culm Alive the news sheet of the Culm Valley Activities Centre printed by the Council for Christian Care printing team in collaboration with MSC. Issue No. 1 undated.

25.3 VILLAGE C

25.3.1 Village C is just over 4 miles from Village A and some 5 miles from the nearest town. There is no public transport. There is no village shop. A greengrocery van calls once a week. There is a post office. Farming and building are the main sources of employment. There are some small MSC supported businesses. There are a few unemployed youths. The picture, though again very different from that of Village A, is not one of total lethargy, but rather one of private pursuits, such as metalwork and music.

25.3.2 Several unemployed, busy, middle-class people expressed an interest in the research, but all of them have their own transport and access to whatever educational resources they feel they need. Other working people, equally busy, were not interested. Neither was the handful of unemployed youths. They were described by a leading figure in the village as "a handful of immature lads, with low horizons and no motivation. They are all mobile and roar around on motorbikes until the money runs out, then they go fishing". All the people interviewed, including the unemployed youths, recommended that we should try Village A. "They're always game to have a go".

25.4 A HOME FOR THE PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED PEOPLE

25.4.1 X is a local authority home for severly disabled people, aged between 16 and 60. It has 25 residents and adjoins a Day Centre for physically handicapped people. Although X is in a town, it's residents form as isolated a rural community as it is possible to imagine: rural, in that many of them come from outlying areas where their families still live; isolated in that they are totally dependent on others. All residents are unemployed and largely unoccupied: the possibility of rehabilitation is limited by the present level of available resources, knowledge and skill.

25.4.2 Assessment of the residents' learning needs is difficult: some have had a limited educational experience because of early injury, some are affected by medication, motivation is a problem for some, whereas others struggle to learn against great odds, e.g. a woman who acquired an OU degree during the earlier phases of multiple sclerosis, who is now physically helpless but intellectually unimpaired.

25.4.3 Both the County Homes Adviser and the officer-in-charge of the home showed a keen interest in the possibilities offered by the EXCOM/DAROME system and the network it supports. So did some of the residents. It might be necessary to call upon volunteers to work on a one-to-one basis with the residents. It would be satisfying to use the residents' own skills as part of the resources. The adjacent Day Centre serving between 28 and 40 disabled people could be another resource. We were encouraged to approach the Director of Social Services with a request for funding a workstation once our network was established and working.

26 We learned a lot about motivation and individual differences. Village A did not need us. Village B was in the care of others who were struggling with their own priorities and looked forward to joining forces with us once we had got the project going. Village C was not interested. We turned to other researchers and county officers for comment: to officers of the Dartington Trust, the County planning department, the Social Services Department, the Exeter Health District, the Community Council, Citizens' Advice Bureaux - all directed us to Okehampton.* (This surprised us because we had not recognised that there are towns which can be seen as isolated). We remembered that our own College annexe at Seaton had been established to help meet the needs of isolated villages in the east of the area; it seemed wise to use Seaton as our third point and to look for further funds, to buy a fourth workstation for one of the villages. We were unsuccessful in this. However, the village studies led us into a deeper awareness of individual differences and of the overriding importance of informal networks: networks which are turning to M.S.C. for the support which is not forthcoming from F.E. and Adult Education.**

OKEHAMPTON

27 We began with Okehampton, a small town in mid-Devon with a population of about 4,000 and a hinterland of some 30 villages. In January 1984, 630 people were registered as unemployed. Okehampton is an area "on everyone's peripheries." It is roughly equidistant from Barnstaple, Exeter and Plymouth, and is "pulled apart" by these towns. "It has no sense of being a centre", though it is centrally placed.

STUDIES

28 In looking at educational needs and provision, we were able to draw upon a number of studies of the area.*** The Okehampton Community Development Project (see Appendix III) showed that

i) the range and variety of L.E.A. courses is limited by the pre-requisite 10 enrolments per class
ii) innovative classes fail to attract takers
iii) travelling is a problem
iv) take-up of courses is largely middle-class.

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* Okehampton is identified as an area of special need in The right to know: a review of advice services in rural areas. National Council of Social Services 1978.

** In Devon, F.E. and Adult Education work closely together.

*** The Hatherleigh study, the Dartington study, the Community Development Project, the Community College survey.

OKEHAMPTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE

29. We engaged the interest and support of Okehampton Community College whose enthusiasm we gratefully acknowledge. The Community College had conducted its own survey of educational needs in the area in 1982, hoping "to join the statutory and voluntary organisations and individuals in a common effort to advance education and provide facilities for recreation and leisure time activities to the benefit of all." A questionnaire, followed by a well attended public meeting, led to the raising of the level of expectation in the area and increased the numbers of people attending established courses.

COURSES OFFERED

30. The College displayed our posters: the schoolchildren distributed our leaflets. We broadcast over local radio and were reported in the parish magazine. We left our leaflets in the Job Centre, the Library and the post offices. We offered a menu of half day and one day Saturday introductory courses at the College, beginning in November 1983. They were based on identified needs and, in the case of the navigation course, known demand. They were: Cooking on a Shoestring, Coping with Stress, Basic Navigation, Starting a Small Business, Electricity in the Home, Writing and Directing a Village Play. These were face-to-face courses which would be followed by EXCOM/DAROME lessons. Only two attracted students: the Basic Navigation course and the Village Play course. 6 students enrolled for each, knowing that they follow-up courses could not begin until the equipment was installed. Only one of our enrolled students was unemployed. We recognised that we had not yet reached an important target group and we began to drop in on drop-in centres. (See Section Seven.)

31. In the event, we were able to work intensively only at this one site remote from the College in Tiverton (EDCFE). Various delays meant that we were able to do only a few classes in Seaton before the end of the project. Work is continuing there.

Section Four

CURRICULAR NEEDS OF UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE

32. It is difficult to ascertain the learning needs of unemployed people except at the level of the lowest common denominator. The unemployed are not a homogeneous group. Furthermore, unemployment figures are unreliable: they leave out many women and the whole of the informal "black" economy. Even when figures are available their implications for appropriate vocational preparation may be mis-read, as Michael Young pointed out in a speech at Dartington giving as an example the fact that schools in Sheffield were still training pupils for jobs despite the fact that in 1983 only 10% of Sheffield school leavers got jobs.

URBAN UNEMPLOYED

33. Various studies of the educational needs of urban unemployed have been done. The University of Leeds project (1982) involved working with trades unions and other bodies to facilitate not only direct provision of short courses, but flow of information and the development of a wide-ranging counselling system. It recommended that priority should be given to developing work with the unemployed as part of a move away from the persistent middle-class bias of current adult education provision.* The New University of Ulster project (1982) showed that only 1 in 5 had enrolled on a course since becoming unemployed and identified the following barriers to participation:

- costs (fees, travelling, meals)
- lack of confidence compounded by a generally low level of educational achievement and inadequate counselling
- lack of child-care facilities
- lack of knowledge about what opportunities exist.**

The main learning needs identified by both projects are for survival courses, for courses on welfare rights, for retraining courses for real jobs, for opportunities to rebuild self-confidence. These needs are common to unemployed people of all ages in urban and rural areas.

CONTACTING THE UNEMPLOYED

34. The problems encountered by both these projects in trying to contact unemployed people were problems we experienced in our project also. "The unemployed are remote from the usual middle-class publicity brochures." "Publicity in local radio, papers and posters was largely a waste of time." This was not the case in Totnes, whose "Third Age Project" was launched at a public meeting attended by more than 50 unemployed people, all drawn through papers and posters. (See Section Eight, paragraph 103).

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* WARD Kevin "A university adult education project with the unemployed." Journal of adult education studies. Sept. 1983. pp 74-84.

** MUNDAY John and Sue. "What the unemployed want." Adult Education.

We tried all of these approaches* and the results were disappointing.

35. We knew that there would be problems contacting unemployed people direct in scattered rural areas: there is no street corner culture. Nevertheless, the direct approach was attempted and proved most effective at the needs-gathering stage. The following contacts with unemployed people were made:

- drop-in centres at our chosen sites
- job-centres in 3 towns
- pubs in several villages
- mother and toddler groups
- public meeting at Totnes
- house visits in the South Hams.

36. The table in Appendix I gives some idea of the learning needs of unemployed people in rural communities identified during the project. They can be summarised as follows:

i) job finding
ii) mastering the benefits maze
iii) cost-cutting
iv) income-generating
v) personal development

These involve broad-based skills in information retrieval, problem-solving, decision-making, as well as interpersonal skills. It can be seen that the basic learning needs of unemployed people are the same in cities and in rural areas.** However, the solutions offered in cities are not valid for rural areas as the main problem is lack of access to information and educational provision. "More effort should be given to improving access to technical education in rural areas, and to forging links between the educational system and the range of job opportunities."*** "We need, for example, more open systems of learning, more efficient training methods (including full exploitation of new technology in the training process) ...."**** Our research endorses the above comments and our choice of delivery system is an attempt to create a more accessible and open learning system operating in small centres with a good infrastructure.

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* 1,100 leaflets were distributed by hand; leaflets were placed in post offices, job centres and mobile libraries and with the Chamber of Trade; posters were displayed in Okehampton; notices were placed in parish newsletters; radio interviews invited enquiries.

** Much of our information about the needs of unemployed people comes from the British Unemployment Resources Network (BURN) and the Cornwall and Devon Unemployment Resources Network (CADURN.)

*** RURAL VOICE: A rural strategy. June 1981

**** White Paper. Training for jobs. January 1984.

Section Five

THE EXCOM/DAROME SYSTEM IN ACTION

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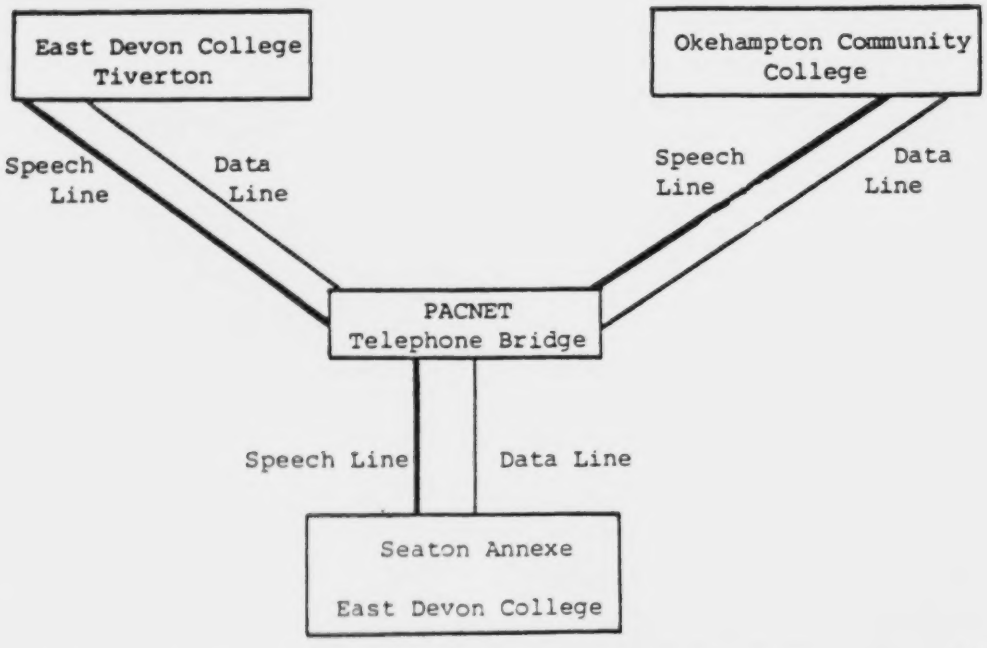
37. THE EXCOM/DAROME SYSTEM

The EXCOM/DAROME system at the moment requires two telephone lines at each Centre. One line is for speech and one for data-graphic and written material. The speech line uses the DAROME Convenor loudspeaker telephone and the data line uses the EXCOM units. A telephone bridge is required to connect more than two centres together. PACNET, the teleconferencing initiative financed largely by MSC and situated at Plymouth Polytechnic, provides us with this facility. The following diagram shows the present College EXCOM network.



Tiverton is approximately 40 miles from Okehampton and 30 from Seaton. Okehampton to Seaton is about 70 miles.

EQUIPMENT AT EACH CENTRE

38. The EXCOM data line equipment consists of a keyboard and digitising pad or light pen connected via the main unit to a visual display unit of high resolution quality. Pages of data can be created from the keyboard or digitising pad or by using the light pen directly on the screen. Data can be stored in the memory of the EXCOM unit or transferred to tape for retention as a permanent record or for use later. A printer can be connected to the EXCOM equipment to provide hard copy.

39. The DAROME voice line equipment provides from 1 - 4 microphones at each site with manual controls and a loudspeaker.

40. This equipment allows a high level of interaction between students and between teacher and students. What is said by any one person is heard by all. What is written on any one screen is transmitted to all. The equipment demands the conventional skills of the teacher, but no special skills, and the network can best be envisaged as an extended classroom with the EXCOM unit providing an extended blackboard.

41. Through this network small groups of learners in different places can, at the same time, be connected with each other to form a viable class. Thus a class may well consist of 5 - 6 students at Seaton, and 5 - 6 students at Okehampton, with the teacher at Tiverton. The larger the network the smaller the number of students needed at each centre to form a viable class. The teaching input can come from any one of the centres and we would encourage this development. Thus the expertise and information at any one point on the network is available to all the other centres. This equipment can also act as an information point in that it can access local and national public viewdata banks, e.g. PRESTEL, and can serve as a computer-aided learning unit for individualised learning packages. However, we would see the highly interactive learning/teaching system as most important for this characteristic is not evident in other systems.

THE NAVIGATION COURSE AT OKEHAMPTON

42. Owing to the time delays over the delivery of equipment, the navigation course at Okehampton was our only major practical piece of work and the only extended one. As a matter of policy, we felt that the intial course should be restricted to point-to-point teaching/learning, using the conventional telephone system to connect the two institutions, East Devon College of Further Education and Okehampton Community College, because this removed the necessity of phasing our project to the development of the Plymouth Conference Bridge (PACNET), the technical problems that were bound to occur would be more manageable in a point-to-point situation, and those involved were clearly aware of the experimental nature of the system and would be tolerant of the difficulties that would arise.

43. We were pleased that we made this decision; PACNET was running late and had sufficient problems of its own in setting up the bridge and training operators in audiconferencing techniques, and the technical problems born out of technical malfunction and inexperienced operators proved manageable; no session was closed down because of technical problems.

FEEDBACK FROM THE STUDENTS

44. The following are extracts from a memorandum written by the students at Okehampton. All are teachers and therefore involved themselves in the experiment in a professional as well as a lay capacity.

1) Students enrolled on the navigation course on the understanding that they would be using new techniques in distance-learning and that part of their course would be supported through the EXCOM system.

2) Six students attended a one-day face-to-face initial meeting with the tutor. At this meeting the systems were established, personal contact was made with the tutor and the group and plans were made for the duration of the course.

3) After all the teething problems with the equipment ..... the course started in evening sessions. By this time, because of the delays, four students were left as regular attenders.

4) In each session the tutor in Tiverton made contact with the group in Okehampton through the EXCOM 100 system. Conversation was two-way; instructions and questions one-way, responses and answers the other. Some of the points were supported graphically, the tutor using prepared material or the digitising pad, and the students using the light-pen.

The students' response was limited by the accuracy of the light-pen mode. During each session the students were working on material practically - navigation charts, plotting positions, courses etc.

5) There would have been no NAVIGATION course without the EXCOM facility (travelling costs for the tutor would have been prohibitive for so few students.)

6) The success of the course indicates that it is a system which could have application to other courses - particularly supporting low numbers at multi-centres.

7) Publicity of the system through the course has led to other interests being shown in the possible uses of the system by the Community College:

   a) in isolated villages through the primary school micro
   b) as an information centre in an isolated rural area
   c) to support non-viable 'A' level courses in the Community College (joining with other areas)
   d) to support LINK work in modular units of BTEC work.

8) The system would only be suitable for certain types of courses - those which involve a highly intensive interpersonal relationship would not be satisfied.

9) The reliability of the equipment would have to be greater.

10) Quality of graphic work would need improving. In particular this aspect of the work would have been greatly improved by being supplementary to other media resources. (A digitising pad at each link would be better.)

11) Initially the equipment is expensive, but costs may be recouped from saved travelling expenses.

12) Some students reluctant to join activities of a Community College will still be reluctant, maybe even more so, to join using the EXCOM system.

COMMENTS FROM THE RESEARCH TEAM

45. As monitors of the navigation course we endorse the advantages identified by the students. We would like to add the following:

- The first link-up using the EXCOM/DAROME system was understandably an anxious time for us all. The comment of the student spokesman at the end of the first session was: "The system works better than we had hoped or anticipated."
- It was heartening to feel our choice of system had been vindicated. Despite delays and difficulties, the system worked.

46. The disadvantages listed by the students require comment, for they tell of the difficulties we encountered, the effects they had and how they were overcome, insofar as we could overcome them.

DISADVANTAGES

47. "..... those which involve a highly intensive interpersonal relationship would not be satisfied." (44.8 above) This is true, but it applies to fewer courses than one might think,* and the disadvantage may be a function less of the system than of inexperience and consequent lack of imagination. Furthermore, from the beginning we have recognised that the EXCOM/DAROME system cannot stand alone. Face-to-face sessions of the weekend/day school model need to be integrated into all study programmes. The subject area will determine the balance between the EXCOM/DAROME session and face-to-face sessions, e.g. on a drama course, the history of theatre, costume, stage sets, props and lighting might well be taught using the EXCOM/DAROME system; acting and directing workshops would require a face-to-face situation.

48. "Reliability of equipment would have to be greater." (44.9 above)

Unreliability involved two factors: equipment breakdown or malfunction and our own inexperience. Technical problems arose from both these factors, but which one was responsible was not always apparent. Users' inexperience, coupled with a poorly written EXCOM operator's manual, led to technical problems that suggested faulty equipment when this was not the case. It was easy to blame the equipment for our own ignorance and inexperience.

TECHNICAL HITCHES AND SOLUTIONS - VOICE LINE

49. To our surprise we had as many problems with the voice line as with the data line. With the DAROME Convenor 610K the four microphones have to be carefully positioned in relation to the loudspeaker to avoid feedback. The confined space at Okehampton exacerbated the feedback problem. In the event, the loudspeaker was placed on a chair which stood on a table, so that the microphones and loudspeaker were on different planes.

50. Initially, the switching over from the handset required for dialling to the loudspeaker was clumsily managed and the loudspeaker fuse was blown three or four times. Only when we learned to use the volume control as an on/off switch was the problem solved.

51. The DAROME microphones have a press-to-speak switch which, when released, cuts off both speech and background noise. Initially, the resulting silence was unnerving for the tutor. In the absence of any response, and none can be made until a microphone switch is pressed, the lecturer continued to speak to cover up the silence. This is a problem of managing the system. Once the students recognised the tutor's need for frequent responses, the problem was solved by electing one person at Okehampton to take responsibility for supplying feedback and encouraging the others. At Tiverton, the tutor had to live with the silences and build in feedback spaces. It is being cut off from the grunts, groans, assents and laughter which is unnerving. Someone has to respond to show that the message has been received and understood.

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* In the United States "Telephonic networks currently provide information and courses to medical, legal and agricultural professionals, as well as to students in business, mathematics and engineering ... as yet there is no indication that a specific content discipline is unsuitable for instructional teleconferencing. A major advantage is that ... it allows for interaction between students and the instructor, thus serving as a medium for information exchange, decision-making, and problem-solving."
PARTIN G.R. and ATKINS E.L. Teaching via the electronic blackboard; Directorate of Ed. Tech. U.S. Army Logistics Management Center, Port Lee, Virginia, 1984.

52. Secondly, the lecturer had a problem with the microphone. It is possible for him to leave his microphone open and not press his switch before speaking. This leaves his hands free to operate the EXCOM unit. Unfortunately, the circuit then becomes sensitive to extraneous noise and this breaks up the speech he receives. Thus, the lecturer has to remember to press before speaking.

53. A third management problem relates to "Press before speaking." People have a tendency to press and speak, and thus the listener loses the beginnings of speech. Clarity of speech is also very important. Lecturers need to develop well modulated speech with clear pronunciation and precise articulation. Mumbling gives rise to unintelligibility.

54. The final management problem on the speech line is related to over-enthusiasm. When someone came in before the previous speaker had finished, the end of the first speaker's sentence and the beginning of the new speaker's were lost.

The quality of telephone lines was variable and there were noisy lines. We therefore had to disconnect and re-dial. This problem should disappear when the network uses a properly operated bridge.

55. All those involved in the new system had to learn the disciplines imposed by the system. The price of interaction is the recognition and management of the technical constraints of the voice line.

TECHNICAL HITCHES AND SOLUTIONS - DATA LINE

56. The technical problems associated with the EXCOM system can be traced to 4 factors: users' inexperience, firmware, hardware, the telephone system.

USER INEXPERIENCE

57. At the most basic level was lack of familiarity with the keyboard: pressing the wrong key can disconnect the line. A second telephone call remedies this.

58. More distressing was the apparent loss of hours of work spent in constructing a cassette tape which, on replay, produced only corrupted images. This, although we did not know it at the time, was attributable to lack of information in the EXCOM operator's manual. We simply did not know in full the recording procedure. This inexperience was very destructive. Only the lecturer's professionalism and the determination of the research team kept the project alive. This was our lowest point and the most extreme example of the consequences of operator inexperience.

59. Other points were minor in comparison. The resolution of graphics is superb but the screen is small. The lecturer must use the full screen in preparing his graphics unless he has a very positive reason for not doing so.

FIRMWARE

60. We are using a system which is in the process of being developed and is not complete. There were a number of "bugs." In the first version of firmware "tape replay" mode would switch in and make any form of transmission down the data line impossible, including data from tape. A later version of firmware corrected this fault.

61. Other minor but irritating faults occurred at random and may have been due to interference from the telephone lines as well as some obscure "bug," but there were no other consistent faults.

HARDWARE

62. The hardware has been robust and fault-free, apart from the first light-pens. The light-pen adjustment is extremely sensitive and requires confidence born of experience to set up. The light-pen is crude compared with the digitising or bit-pad. Writing on a curved screen is physically not easy and the difficulty is compounded by the problem of parallax. The principle behind the light-pen - interactive graphics - is one that we feel must be preserved. But the greater reliability and effectiveness of the bit-pad mean that this is preferable to the light-pen. The monitor microprocessor keyboard and bit-pad have proved extremely robust and fault free.

63. An important limitation of the system at present is the quality of BT equipment in use in rural areas. Some obsolete electro-mechanical exchanges are still in service and there is much old line plant (telephone cables.) These cause noise and limit the speed of data transmission. They are gradually being replaced. The problem is minimised by the bridge.

64. "Quality of graphic work would need improving." (44.10 above)

The EXCOM VDU is a high resolution monitor. Many of the manufacturers' representatives at the ETIC Conference at the University of Bradford 1984* commented appreciatively on this quality. Thus this criticism does not appear to be directed at the technical quality of the equipment. The tool used for preparing the graphics for the navigation course was the digitising pad. This can produce better graphics than most teachers produce on OHPs or blackboards, but they are smaller and this means that much care is needed in their preparation. The graphics studio, now available to us through PACNET, is capable of much more sophisticated graphics.

65. This criticism, however, raises two basic teaching issues.

i) When should graphics be sent through the post and when transmitted? In the case of the Navigation Course, only charts and maps covering larger areas than the screen could accommodate were sent through the post. The screen was used to outline the principles and calculations of chart plotting. This was followed by chart exercises. The students reported back their results and particular points were clarified using the screen. It should be recognised that there may be other valid reasons for sending materials through the post. Lecturers need to think this question through in relation to their own disciplines to maximise the effectiveness of the EXCOM system.

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* International Conferences ETEC 84 Bradford University. The EXCOM/DAROME system was demonstrated and paper given.

ii) How should voice and graphics be integrated? On the Navigation Course graphics were not used at an elementary response level as in multi-choice questions and filling in blanks etc. At this level the voice was preferred. Later experience with lower ability groups and less experienced learners showed us that the elementary response use of graphics proved motivating. In planning their graphics lecturers new to the EXCOM/DAROME system need to identify the appropriate response levels for their students.

66. The Okehampton students say that the system is expensive. (44.11 above) This issue is examined in Section Seven - COSTS.

67. They referred also to reluctant students (44.12 above)

This is a well-known problem of motivation.

LINK UPS INVOLVING 3 SITES

68. Valuable as the Navigation Course was, the real potential of the system, and the one attracting most attention from the professional educators,* was on connecting 3 or more sites together simultaneously. To do this requires a telephone bridge. By happy coincidence the PACNET initiative at Plymouth Polytechnic provided us with the most up-to-date telephone bridge in the U.K. What is equally important is that it provided us with trained operators who understood what we were trying to do.**

69. A number of 3-way link ups featuring Seaton/Exeter/Plymouth - Okehampton - Tiverton took place, among them the following:

i) An "A" level Psychology lesson on Visual Perception. This presented a number of visual illusions and the Stroop experiment (on the subject of verbal/visual interference.) This showed it was possible to carry out certain experiments using the EXCOM/DAROME system.

ii) A lesson from Module I of the Certificate of Travel Agency Competency (COTAC) course. This revealed the role of elementary response levels for lower ability and less well motivated students.

iii) An "A" level Communications lesson. This lesson involved students at different sites who had not previously met. They found this inhibited their initial responses when using the system. As a minimum requirement it was felt that photographs of staff and students should be made available. Acceptable black and white newspaper-type photographs can be reproduced by the EXCOM studio, which at that time was not avilable to us. This lesson underlined the need to integrate the use of the EXCOM/DAROME system with face-to-face teaching/learning situations.

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* See Section Nine - What Next?

** The O.U. had to develop their own telephone bridges and train their own operators as B.T. Conference Bridge Operators could not understand or accept their requirements.

iv) Other multi-site demonstrations were given and one Steering Committee meeting was held using a 3-way link up with members attending the nearest convenient site.

70. Out of all these lessons and demonstrations the following points emerged:

i) The technique works. A highly interactive person to person teaching/learning situation is possible outside the classroom, involving students in different locations. The technology is reliable.

ii) The need to put faces to voices supports our contention that the system should not be used alone, but should be integrated with face to face teaching/learning.*

iii) The more sites involved, the more skilful the management of the learning situation needs to be.

iv) The studio should be a part of any major network, because it makes it possible to create very high quality graphics.

v) Although the system calls on the traditional chalk and talk skills of the teacher, staff training is needed to:

a) master basic audio-conferencing techniques and recognise that the system is best limited to short inputs of 5 - 10 minutes, followed by question and answer sessions,

b) structure teaching materials so as to meet the constraints of the system, and take advantage of the new possibilities it offers,

c) minimise the destructive effects of user inexperience,

d) ensure that the microphones are used correctly and that disciplined procedures are followed.

vi) The EXCOM/DAROME system enables many current educational constraints to be overcome and the potential of the technique has been widely recognised in Devon.**

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* A common practice in teleconferencing in the USA is to send a photograph of the tutor as part of the learning package.

** See Section Eight. Interest in the system was such that we were invited to take part in the T.V. series "Country Crisis." We featured in the last programme which was on modern technology and the countryside.

Section Six

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STAFF DEVELOPMENT

PART ONE: CURRICULAR THEMES

71. A number of FEU publications have identified and explored key curricular themes for young people: negotiation, basic skills, guidance, assessment, relevance, experiential learning. These themes apply also to the learning needs of adults in scattered rural communities. Curriculum-led staff development implies training in all of these areas, as well as in curriculum design and assessment. Such training should improve staff performance and meet student needs.

72. The FEU identifies two major areas of focus: individual development and organisational development.

i) Individual Development
The emphasis on counselling in courses with a vocational preparation component calls for certain qualities: openness, flexibility, self-awareness and a range of interpersonal skills.

ii) Organisational Development
Organisations must also adapt and develop if they are to meet changing needs. Development in organisations calls for decision-making, team-building and enhanced communication skills

Both individual and organisational training needs might be met through training sessions, awareness-raising conferences, peer discussions and planned experiential learning.

AWARENESS-RAISING

73. Awareness-raising exercises are particularly necessary in Britain which, unlike other countries such as Australia and the U.S.A., has been slow to recognise the potential of the telephone system as a teaching/learning network. We set up such exercises during the second half of the reseach period giving demonstrations of the EXCOM system to such diverse bodies as:

- Boards of Governors
- F.E.College staff
- Community College staff
- Education Committee members
- Senior Nursing Tutors
- The E.T.E.C. International Conference (University of Bradford 1984)
- various small businesses

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as well as to the general public through Open Day exhibitions and through a television programme: " Country Crisis? " (T.S.W. Channel 4). These exercises resulted in a much wider appreciation of the potential role of audiographics in a rural county such as Devon. (See Section What Next?)

NETWORK DEVELOPMENT

74. We have argued throughout that the learning needs of scattered rural communities in Devon may be best met by an inter-agency team. Setting up and operating such a team would require all the skills listed above (para.72) and the operation would have to be negotiated with the staffs of the agencies involved. Our experience suggests that it is more productive to plan initially for organisational development than for individual development. Team-building becomes a training programme in its own right.

75. It cannot be too strongly stated that a network is a network is a network. Once established, an EXCOM-based network should be available to users other than those who created the network, to as many user-groups as possible, though priorities would need to be established for as long as it remained a scarce resource. Thus, subject areas under threat because of small numbers (such as Classics) and unable to draw funding, could take advantage of an existing network. The system could also be used for educational planning and meetings of other bodies.

76. Few would question the value of inter-agency co-operation in staff development. In another context it has been observed that " working closely with ITB personnel and youth workers provided much greater understanding and skills in operating UVP schemes than normal in-service provision." * But unfortunately, there is " little evidence locally or regionally of worthwhile cooperation between colleges, LEAs and the MSC in promoting staff development directly or indirectly by means of discussion. "... " Direct involvement of the MSC in this kind of activity might have much to recommend it. " **

77. We regret that within the research project we have not had the time to implement inter-agency development, though a start has been made with Schools of Nursing in adjacent Health Districts. We feel that the issue is important enough to warrant a research project of its own.

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* FEU Teaching skills June 1982 para.56
** ibid. para.54.

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PART TWO: AN EXCOM/DAROME-BASED STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

I. FAMILIARITY WITH THE TECHNOLOGY

78. We learned from our experience and mistakes with the Navigation course (See Section Five for details) that we needed to design a short training programme to build confidence in potential users of the system. Such a staff development programme includes the following:

i) development of audioconferencing skills to manage the learning situation.

ii) development of audiographic skills using the EXCOM unit.

79. Audioconferencing skills: PACNET * provides training packages for audioconference organisers and participants. In addition to working with the issues covered by these guides, the staff need to experiment with voice-operated and switch-operated loudspeaker telephones.

80. Audiographic skills:

i) The EXCOM unit has the following equipment:

- keyboard
- light pen
- digitising pad or tablet
- micro-processor
- high resolution VDU
- colour printer
- data recorder (audio-cassette player/recrder)
- modem

This set-up stongly resembles that of a micro-computer, but the similarity is misleading and the set-up is more appropriately compared with a videotext terminal. Instructions are given by Menu on the screen, clearly identified keys on the keyboard, and clear guides on the digitising pad (DRAW, LINE, RUB, etc.,) There is no computer language to master.

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* PACNET, Plymouth Polytechnic, Drake's Circus, Plymouth, Devon.

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ii) The EXCOM unit has a number of functions. Training begins with the use of the terminal in the CYCLOPS and TELEWRITE modes. These are selected from the Menu displayed when the unit is switched on. The CYCLOPS mode is selected for preparation of material and the TELEWRITE mode for transmission to, or reception from, other stations.

iii) The keyboard keys used are thus limited to:

- QUIT
- ANNOTATE (including Cursor Control)
- TABLET
- LIGHT PEN
- SAVE
- RECALL
- REPLAY
- PRINT
- DIRECTORY
- DISCONNECT

iv) The keyboard may be used also as a typewriter for annotating when this is prefered to the LIGHTPEN or TABLET.

v) Colour selection is through LIGHTPEN or TABLET.

vi) Use of both LIGHTPEN and TABLET calls for traditional "chalk" skills. Clear instructions for use are given in English on screen and tablet.

vii) Material displayed on the screen can be stored in the following ways:

- in local memory, using SAVE and RECALL keys
- on audio-cassette tape, using RECORD and REPLAY keys
- on printouts, using the PRINTER.

81. Initially, the EXCOM training is given with the unit in a stand-alone position. Later, connection procedures to the telephone network are rehearsed. Finally, voice and data hook-ups are executed, firstly point-to-point and later multi-point, using the PACNET bridge.

82. We estimate that a 2 - 3 day course is sufficient to familiarise teachers with the technicalities of the system.

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II. TEACHING METHODS AND THE EXCOM/DAROME SYSTEM

83. THE OPENNESS OF THE TEACHING/LEARNING SITUATION IS THE KEY FEATURE OF THE SYSTEM. There is a high level of personal interaction through both the voice and data lines. Whatever is said by one can be heard by all on the network and whoever wishes to reply can do so. Whatever is present on the screen can be seen by all. Data, diagrams and drawings can be discussed and amended by anyone at any terminal. There is instant feedback - immediate restatements, clarifications and elaborations can be made. Thus the most important models for structuring lesson material are stimulus/response or interactive models: question and answer, noughts and crosses, interactions where inputs from the teacher are balanced by responses from students. The one-way transmission of the lecture model makes least use of the high level of interaction that is made possible through this system.

84. This openness contrasts with both computer-aided learning (CAL) and traditional distance-learning programmes, where the student works in isolation following a programme of directed learning. This is not to deny their usefulness, but to recognise their constraints. The EXCOM/DAROME system has its own constraints, but it does overcome the problem of isolation. We do not see the EXCOM system as a substitute for these approaches, but rather as a means of tutorial support, since it makes possible the interaction which they lack.

85. A second important feature of the system has already been discussed, namely that it calls for the development of existing skills rather than requiring the development of new skills. The kind of effort required is equivalent to that which a new teacher puts into preparing material for the first time. The technical problems are similar to those involved in preparing slides for overhead projectors for the first time.

86. The most obvious difference from the traditional classroom is the lack of face-to-face contact and the loss of non-verbal communication. The voice-operated loudspeaker microphones allow a certain amount of vocal feedback (groans, laughter) to filter through, but the manually operated DAROME/CONVENOR microphones do not. It seems that the loudspeaker telephones used in this research project may prove the least desirable.

87. The EXCOM unit can also be used to access national and international viewdata databases. The development of systems such as Prestel with its open pages, closed user groups and gateways to third party computers offers teachers new opportunities for curriculum development. We have not been able to explore this, but we feel that it is worth exploring.

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SUMMARY

88. Staff training and development along these lines could:
- foster inter-agency cooperation in meeting learning and information needs
- bring together personnel from training and education
- raise awareness of the educational potential of the telephone network
- preserve minority subjects
- create new learning opportunities
- allow expert input from any point on the network
- support and draw upon community resources by offering a user-friendly technology to scattered rural communities.

Section Seven

COSTS

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89. Cost considerations fall into the following categories:

- capital costs of equipment
- operating and on-going costs as compared to conventional teaching systems
- social and opportunity costs

CAPITAL INSTALLATION

90. There are three types of installation in a network:

i) The most expensive is the studio (from £12,000 to £15,000 in the case of EXCOM). This makes possible the preparation of elaborate teaching materials. A studio could service a network of about 20 stations.

ii) The next level is the workstation itself (in the region of £3,000.) Each station can transmit materials and tuition to all other stations.

iii) The cheapest level (under consideration by the manufacturers of EXCOM) is a station, which is interactive in voice and light-pen mode only; in other words, it has no keyboard (under £1,000). This is within the area of financial discretion exercised by an educational institution.

91. As with all technical innovation, initial costs are likely to fall fairly quickly and dramatically. Much more immediately useful is the fact that the company producing EXCOM may be in a position soon to enter into leasing arrangements with local authorities. Were this to happen, the lower capital cost should make it easier for the County to provide a network of workstations in Community Colleges and FE Colleges.

92. Each station on the network requires two telephone lines, one for data, one for speech. Installation costs are approximately £200 per station.

OPERATING AND ONGOING COSTS

93. Ongoing costs comprise telephone charges, staffing and maintenance.

TELEPHONE COSTS

94. COSTS PER SITE PER HOUR
(BT tariffs in force October 1984)

	Peak times	Standard times	Cheap times
Local rate	£4.04	£3.04	£0.76
Up to 56 km	£12.14	£8.10	£2.53
Over 56km	£24.28	£18.40	£6.07

95. Thus, telephone charges for linking 7 sites for 1 hour in the afternoon up to 56 kilometres would be about £60.00. This would reduce to £21 at local rates. Prior transmission of data during off peak times would reduce the length of transmission to allow for students to complete back-up work. The telephone charge of £60.00 approximates to the cost of employing 4 Lecturers Grade I for one hour of class contact. To provide an individual tutor at each of 7 sites would cost approximately £105, plus travelling costs. Using an EXCOM network would cost £75.00 (£60.00 telephone charge and £15.00 tutor.) Thus in crude terms an EXCOM network is at least as financially efficient as traditional tutoring methods.

96. We understand that BT may consider the introduction of new, and more favourable tariff structures in the south-west.*

STAFF-STUDENT RATIOS (SSR)

97. Staff-student ratios are increasing annually. In 1982-83, the target SSR was 10.4, which implies an actual class size of 15. In 1984-85 an SSR target of 13.5 (actual class size 20) is indicated. This has a profound effect upon educational provision, particularly in a predominantly rural area such as Devon. A link up of 2 to 4 students at each site would be in line with SSR targets. In addition, some authorities may well see an EXCOM network as a route to staffing economies: e.g. narrow specialisms could be restricted to one site without damage to opportunities across the LEA area.

MAINTENANCE

98. No figures are yet available from the manufacturers for maintenance costs.

SOCIAL AND OPPORTUNITY COSTS

99. Money spent on creating a network of this type would reduce the travelling time and costs of staff and students. Under present accounting procedures it is impossible to quantify the extent of this reduction as it is difficult to identify which parts of an Authority's gross transport costs relate to transporting students for minority studies or to pursue courses available at only one site. However, it seems probably that savings on such transport would go a long way towards supporting the capital running costs of an EXCOM network, and in certain circumstances, such a network offers financial advantages over traditional on-site provision.

100. The increased availability of staff would give greater cirricular choice and increase flexibility within each centre. The expertise of the whole network would be available to each centre the expertise of each centre would be available to the whole network.

101. The class size constraint that currently inhibits so many adult education initiatives would be overcome. New learning opportunities may also mean new sources of revenue for the authority.

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* Development Commission Report: Implications of high technology for rural areas 1984.

Section Eight

EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDED BY OTHER AGENCIES

DROP-IN CENTRES

102 Large cities have drop-in centres for young unemployed people offering leisure activities and courses. A number of reports have been made of detached youth work in cities such as Sheffield, Coventry and Manchester, as well as London. There are some drop-in centres in rural areas; they are usually available for unemployed people of all ages, and tend to be used by men rather than by women.* They suffer from the usual problems of access. Among the most successful in Devon are "the Third Age Project" and the "Bideford Skills Swop" programme.

THE THIRD AGE PROJECT

103 The Third Age Project was established in 1981 by the Dartington Institute, with EEC and Nuffield Foundation money, as a pilot project in the Totnes/Buckfastleigh/Paignton area. Its purpose was "to throw light on the ways in which mature unemployed and retired people could be helped and could help themselves." It led to the formation of an Association to continue this work and also to advise on setting up projects in other areas for the unemployed, particularly those aged over 40. "The answer is to get together and share ourselves, our skills and life experiences, make the money go further and turn the difficulties of life into an enjoyable experience together."**

104 A number of groups have been set up under the name of "Money Savers at TAP" including motor repairs, food growing, money stretching, wood cutting; other groups offer courses in self-help, computing, new initiatives, creative writing. The groups are self-teaching and TAP has set up a "barter bank" or skills register to serve the area. The expectation is that the Association will become self-financing once the pump-priming money is exhausted.

BIDEFORD SKILL SWOP

105 A short-term Community Programme set up the SKILL SWOP Drop-in centre for unemployed people in 1982. There were early difficulties: a woodwork shop and sewing machines were provided but not used. "We had the management against us saying: 'the unemployed are not talented, are lethargic and uninterested.'"* It seemed that self-help was not working very well. However, MSC proved helpful and funded one part-timer for the project in January 1983. Various Dartington Trust agencies came to the rescue also (the Community Programme Agency and the YTS) and helped to devise a successful joint strategy to get funding for new premises under the Community Programme. The building stage will cost £65,000 all but £3,000 of which is coming from MSC. The work team has been drawn as far as possible from the unemployed. The first users of the new premises will be professional craftsmen and women who will get an income either from the Community Programme of from the EEC Social Fund. They will be joined by unemployed people wishing to learn or improve on their skills.

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* This is a source of concern to the British Unemployment Resources Network (BURN) which is recommending special facilities and approaches to attract women to use Drop-in centres.

** TAP Newsletter No. 8. August 1982.

OTHER CENTRES

6. Centres are beginning to spring up elsewhere in Devon.* Okehampton now has its own Drop-in centre supported by voluntary help. We dropped-in on the centre and found the people there cautiously interested in what we were trying to do, but non-committal. Jobs were what they wanted, not courses.

7. Local initiative in some villages (sometimes with the help of M.S.C. and charitable trusts) has led to the creation of educational and training opportunities, usually at very low cost to the participants. Examples are given in Appendix II and the implications are discussed in Section Nine.

M.S.C. AND OTHER AGENCIES

08. What is significant in all this grass roots development is that the formal education system is hardly involved at all, despite the efforts of a number of colleges and adult education staff to set up self-help groups. It is other agencies which have taken on major roles: Dartington as initiator and fund-finder, M.S.C. as funder and enabler, even the D.H.S.S. as encourager through its "Opportunities for volunteering" scheme which removes the threat of loss of benefit when people undertake voluntary work.

CONCLUSION

09. It has become clear to us through our village studies that such agencies are more acceptable sources of support for adult learning in villages than the formal education system, which is seen as inflexible about numbers, fees and times, and above all as town-based and therefore out of touch. We did not encounter this criticism (of being out of touch) in the small towns we studied: Totnes and Okehampton.

10. We contend that an INTER-AGENCY network could overcome this difficulty and offer the combined support of MSC, church, other organisations and the education system to towns and villages alike.

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* Report to Cornwall and Devon Unemployment Resources Network (CADURN) and to BURN. CADURN newsletter October 1984.

CADURN's PROPOSAL for a Community Programme team of resource and development workers to help self-help groups is being steadily refined: "our original idea of a regional team had to be turned into a pilot in Devon with the aim that it be copied in Cornwall and Somerset. Our pilot has now been worked over, and is being put to Managing Agents as a scheme to employ people part-time on developing self-help groups and liaising between them and other agencies, and to use the rest of their time, possibly at the Agents' expense, as trainers for workers on the Community Programme and to liaise on the new training plans that the M.S.C. are building. Look out for the next thrilling instalment!"

Section Nine.

WHAT NEXT?

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111. The project has generated new initiatives which go beyond the brief. They are listed here for information:

SUBMISSIONS

112. The potential of this approach has been recognised at many levels as is shown by the number of submissions for funding in which the system is seen to have an important role, e.g.

i) East Devon College of Further Education's own submission (backed by PACNET) to MSC Open Tech for £40,000 to extend the network to 5 sites for the teaching of a course leading to the Certificate of Travel Agency Competency (COTAC).

ii) Devon County's submissions to the DES Education Supports Grants for Informational Technology and to PICKUP, and to M.S.C.

iii) An inter-agency submission under the Development Plan for Devon to help scattered rural communities by making village schools into EXCOM/DAROME workstations.

COURSES

113. The following initiatives involving the College annexe at Seaton are in hand:

i) The delivery of certain BTEC modules, e.g. Accounts, not available within local schools in the Seaton area.

ii) The provision of 'A' level endorsements, e.g. Microelectronics, which require the expertise of College staff, and cannot normally be provided because of small numbers or lack of resources in the schools in the Seaton area.

iii) The integration of 'A' level Communications learning at Tiverton and Seaton.

iv) EXCOM is being used to access PRESTEL for a number of courses, particularly those on tourism.

114. All these initiatives show that the College is in a position to continue and to develop the work begun under the research brief and has the energy and commitment to do so. But the new system costs across traditional college zoning policies. The issues raised by the conflict of old and new models of education can only be resolved by political decisions that lie outside the power of colleges and educational administration. The research project appears to be leading to the implementation <u>now</u> of a new model of education in rural areas: a permanent network, supporting and supplementing existing models. Furthermore, if the development work linking EXCOM with the BBC Microcomputer proves commercially feasible, and if LEAs have the imagination and the political will, then every village school could <u>soon</u> become part of a teaching/learning network at relatively low cost.

Section Ten

CONCLUSIONS

115 The research team reached the following conclusions:

1. The project has identified some of the learning needs of people in scattered rural communities and devised programmes to meet those expressed. But whilst it is relatively easy to identify needs, especially of unemployed people, it is more difficult to engage those people in courses offered by the formal education system. Some want jobs, not courses; others want funds for self-help, rather than courses in self-help.

2. All formal systems are being completely by-passed in some villages which have a strong sense of community. They have tackled their own learning needs with vigour and success and at low cost. In other villages the education system has been by-passed; assistance is being given by voluntary agencies and by MSC, again at low cost.* "MSC and others by no means think it axiomatic that they should only approach colleges of Further Education to provide training."**

3. If the formal education system is to move into this area of need, it must give priority to network development in partnership with other agencies and with local initiatives.

4. The research project has identified a means of building educational networks which can channel educational expertise into small groups with a good support infrastructure. The network base is the EXCOM/DAROME system.

5. The system has been shown by other researchers to be at least as effective as paper-based Open Learning systems, and much more acceptable to users. The project has shown it to be more cost-effective than traditional provision where this involves heavy transport costs.

6. The system circumvents the LEA constraints on class size by allowing a number of scattered small groups to be taught simultaneously. By the same token it could save minority subjects which are threatened because of these restraints.

7. The system makes a highly effective use of teaching resources because it is so flexible and easy to use. Every point in the network is an input point; it is therefore a resource for communities and other agencies, such as Health & Social Services as well as for the LEA.

8. Educational provision is no longer the monopoly of the formal educational system. The network started by this project can only be developed to its full potential by crossing boundaries, e.g. boundaries between statutory and voluntary agencies, and between college and even county catchment areas. (County and agency boundaries are already crossed by regional schemes such as the Certificate in Social Service.)

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* NTI Information bulletin. "Adult training strategy" June 1984. "The opening up of more widespread opportunities for adults (both employed and unemployed) to train and retrain during their working lives was one of the three interlinked objectives on NTI. Until recently it has been relegated to a back seat in view of the attention devoted to YTS. It is now the main item on the agenda of MSC."

** ibid.

116. In summary, the aims of the project (Paragraph 5) were met as follows:

Aim i) is covered in Conclusion 1 above, discussed throughout the report and illustrated in Appendices I and II.

Aim ii) has not been adequately met for reasons outlined in Conclusions 1 and 2 and discussed in Section Four.

Aim iii) is covered in Conclusions 4 - 6 and discussed in Section Five.

Aim iv) is touched on in Conclusion 7 and is discussed in Section Five.

Aims v) and vi) are covered in Section Five.

117. The team would like to record its appreciation of the support given by the Steering Committee and by Okehampton Community College.

Joan Swallow
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Tiverton
Devon

April 1985

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LEARNING NEEDS IDENTIFIED BY INTERVIEWS

Negotiating Body/Source	Learning Needs Identified and not met	Where?	Target Groups	Curricular Implications
Adult Literacy & Basic Skills Unit	i) Diverse ii) Post-basic	County wide "	Adults "	Basic and Post-basic literacy and numeracy
Citizens' Advice Bureaux	i) Social skills ii) Using DHSS computer iii) cost cutting DIY Information retrieval	County wide	i) 16-19 ii) Unemployed iii) Retired iv) Whole range	Social skills Computer operations Social & life skills Information management
COSIRA	i) Small business management ii) & Shopkeeping courses	County wide	Unemployed	Business studies
Dartington Trust	i) Cost-cutting DIY ii) Income-generating iii) Small businesses iv) Leisure needs v) Teaching skills for volunteer counsellors	Totnes area South Hams N Devon	(40+ unemployed i)-iv) ((Whole range (Volunteers v) (retired business- (men and women	Decision making DIY Adult education classes Staff development Training potential trainers Training potential counsellors
Devon County Councillors	i) Small business ii) Self employment iii) Self-generating learning co-operatives	County wide esp Dunkeswell Bishops Nympton N Molton Huntshaw	Adult 16-19 16-19	Social & life skills Business studies
Devon Parish Councillors	i) Leisure needs ii) Rural skills iii) Motor cycle maintenance iv) Interpersonal skills v) Social & life skills	County wide esp Dunkeswell Bishops Nympton N Molton Huntshaw	Unemployed Unemployed 16-19 16-19 16-19	As above

APPENDIX I (cont'd)

Negotiating Body/Source	Learning Needs Identified and not met	Where?	Target Groups	Curricular Implications
Devon Community Council	i) Collaborative approaches ii) Resource sharing iii) Rural skills iv) Negotiating skills v) Transport maintenance, tourism vi) Local history vii) Archaeology viii) PE - survival ix) Arts & crafts	Okehampton & County wide Willand Moor/Sea	Retired Redundant	Interpersonal skills Vocational preparation decision making Physical education aesthetic development
Frasers Enterprises (County Church Scheme)	i) In-village technology ii) Computers, small businesses	Uffculme & Willand later County-wide	Unemployed	Business studies Self-help office skills computer use
Library: "South Molton Information Project"	Self-help Information retrieval networking	South Molton & hinterland	Adults	As above

APPENDIX I (cont'd)

Negotiating Body/Source	Learning Needs Identified and not met	Where?	Target Groups	Curricular Implications
Social Services Dept - Playgroups	i) Courses on - family & child - playgroup & community - child in play-group	County wide esp N Devon & Mid Devon	i) "difficult to teach mothers" unsupported mothers	Child Care Human growth & Handling stress creatively
- Disabled	ii) - "new horizons"		ii) & iii) disabled	extending the educational range
- Mencap	iii) Learning games for mentally hand-icapped			
- General	iv) Budgeting Rehabilitation		iv) clients in the community	basic skills social & inter-personal skills physical education
- Volunteers	v) Teaching skills		v) volunteers	"new staff" development
	vi) Leisure activities		vi) & vii) unemployed & retired	
	vii) Self employment			
SPLASH (Special Provision for Landscape Action in the South Hams)	i) Woodland management ii) Woodland crafts iii) Use of tools iv) Social & life skills	County wide	Unemployed	As above
Village Appraisals	Cost-cutting	County wide	Unemployed	As above
Village Magazines	i) Income-generating ii) Reviewing old skills iii) Learning new technology	County wide	Unemployed	As above

APPENDIX II

Low Cost Classes at Villages A and B

VILLAGE A

In 1982 - 83 the successful classes included:

i) ONE-DAY CHRISTMAS PREPARATIONS COURSE
(including Christmas lunch and tea)
17 attended
Demonstrators and teachers were paid expenses only

ii) FLOWER ARRANGING
Cost £1 per 3 hour lesson, course of 8 lessons, paid in 2 instalments of £4 each
7 - 9 attended
Local lecturer is paid £5 per session

iii) Afternoon and evening KEEP FIT
Attended by a huge age range including under-age school children
Over 20 attend

iv) BADMINTON
Afternoon classes struggling
Evening classes thriving

v) SQUARE DANCE CLUB
About 14 attend
This class runs at a loss, despite the large numbers and the low fee paid to the 2 teachers: a joint fee of £6.00 per evening.
The teachers live some 5 miles away. They bring their own music.

An upholstery class was offered at an adjacent village, but Village A people were not prepared to travel. They set up their own class. This is the only class that has a man in it, apart from the dancing class in the evening.

VILLAGE B

MSC is funding the centre for 12 months initially. Continued funding will depend upon the extent to which the facilities are used, particularly by the unemployed. The Centre is staffed by a manager, a secretary, 2 contact workers and unpaid instructors. It offers woodwork, (2 pupils per session, 2 sessions per day), metalwork, sewing and machine knitting, printing, drama, pottery, adult literacy and numeracy, photography. It provides a coffee bar, a creche and information, help and advice centre. It displays jobs from Tiverton, Wellington and Honiton Job Centres and offers free telephone calls for job enquiries. The Centre is willing to help with the promotion of similar activities in villages, hamlets or groups of isolated houses up and down the valley, and will try to make available materials, equipment, advice and help.

CHARGES

Tuition for courses provided by the Centre is free. "No charge is made for the services of the Centre and help can be given with transport and with meals to those who take part voluntarily. It will, however, be expected that those who benefit from the service will want to make a donation of 10p each time they participate to ensure that there is always a reserve of money for the future funding of the activities."

L.E.A. AND W.E.A COURSES

Two L.E.A. courses are offered at the following rates:

i)	Painting and drawing.	8 afternoons.	£10.50
ii)	Garment construction.	8 evenings.	£ 9.00

Discussions are in hand with the W.E.A. in liaison with East Devon College of Further Education to bring courses into the Centre.

APPENDIX III

SOME FINDINGS OF THE OKEHAMPTON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

1. L.E.A. PROVISIONS

   a) The range and variety of L.E.A. classes is limited largely by the pre-requisite 10 enrolments per class. "The need to break even on Adult Education Classes will continue to dog provision in an area such as this where population is so thinly spread."

   b) Well-established and traditional classes survive, (e.g. lace-making, German) and new, slightly different classes fail to attract sufficient takers.

   c) Since 1983, BTEC students have been travelling one day per week to Exeter. Transport has to be paid for by the Community College.

2. W.E.A. PROVISION

   In Chagford (within the Okehampton School Catchment Area), a thriving local W.E.A. Group exists. Attempts to establish groups in Okehampton met with little success at first, but there are now a few courses available. It may be significant that a large proportion of the Chagford population appears to be middle-class and professional, possibly with experience of urban levels of provision.

3. NATIONAL EXTENSION COLLEGE PROVISION

   Three initiatives were launched in the area: 'Just the Job', 'Be Your Own Boss' and 'Village Action.' 'Be Your Own Boss' involved a link between Devon County Council and N.E.C. 'Just the Job' involved N.E.C. and T.V. Numbers taking advantage of these courses are not known. 'Village Action' involved N.E.C., Westward Television and the W.E.A. in the provision of media coverage, back-up information and evening classes. 8 attended. Others sent for the information.

4. VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

   a) The Beaford Centre (part of the Dartington Trust's outreach) provides an invaluable artistic stimulus, but because of its isolation its users are usually car owners.

   b) The Community Art Wing is based in Barnstaple and rarely seen in the Okehampton area. The same was true of Medium Fair which was based in Exeter and now no longer exists.

   c) The Preschool Playgroups Association ran a successful training course in Okehampton.

   d) The L.E.A. Youth Leaders Training Scheme was beset with problems.